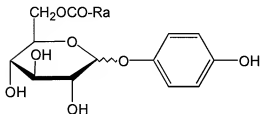


### AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently amended) An arbutin ester compound represented by formula (1):

Formula (1)



wherein Ra is selected from the group consisting of: a hydrophobic group

$\text{R}_1\text{-CH=CH}_2$ , wherein  $\text{R}_1$  is a single bond, an alkyl group or an arylene group;

$\text{R}_1\text{-C(CH}_3\text{)=CH}_2$ , wherein  $\text{R}_1$  is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group;

$\text{R}_1\text{-COOCH=CH}_2$ , wherein  $\text{R}_1$  is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group;

$\text{R}_1\text{-COOH}$ , wherein  $\text{R}_1$  is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group;

$\text{R}_1\text{-COO-R}_2$ , wherein  $\text{R}_1$  is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group; and  $\text{R}_2$  is an alkyl group or an aryl group;

$\text{R}_1\text{-[R}_3\text{-CH=CH-R}_4\text{]}_X\text{-R}_5\text{-CH}_3$ , wherein  $\text{R}_1$ ,  $\text{R}_3$ ,  $\text{R}_4$  and  $\text{R}_5$  are each independently a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group; and X represents a number of repeating units and is 1 to 6;

$\text{R}_1\text{-C(CH}_3\text{)}_3$ , wherein  $\text{R}_1$  is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group;

$\text{R}_1\text{-CH}_3$ , wherein  $\text{R}_1$  is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group.

2.-10. (Canceled)

11. (Currently amended): A composition that inhibits tyrosinase tyrosinase-inhibitor comprising, as an active ingredient, at least one of the arbutin ester compounds according to claim 1.

12. (Currently amended): An external preparation for the skin, comprising the composition tyrosinase inhibitor according to claim 11.

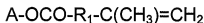
13. (Currently amended): A process for producing an arbutin ester compound, comprising the step of carrying out an esterification reaction of arbutin with a carboxylic acid compound represented by one of formulae (11) to (17) or formula (19):

Formula (11)



wherein A is hydrogen or a substituted or unsubstituted alkyl or vinyl group; and R<sub>1</sub> is a single bond, an alkyl group or an arylene group;

Formula (12)



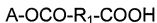
wherein A is hydrogen or a substituted or unsubstituted alkyl or vinyl group; and R<sub>1</sub> is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group;

Formula (13)



wherein A is hydrogen or a substituted or unsubstituted alkyl or vinyl group; and R<sub>1</sub> is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group;

Formula (14)



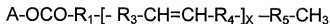
wherein A is hydrogen or a substituted or unsubstituted alkyl or vinyl group; and R<sub>1</sub> is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group;

Formula (15)



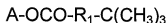
wherein A is hydrogen or a substituted or unsubstituted alkyl or vinyl group; R<sub>1</sub> is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group; and R<sub>2</sub> is an alkyl group or an aryl group;

Formula (16)



wherein A is hydrogen or a substituted or unsubstituted alkyl or vinyl group; R<sub>1</sub>, R<sub>3</sub>, R<sub>4</sub> and R<sub>5</sub> are each independently a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group; and X represents a number of repeating units and is 1 to 6;

Formula (17)



wherein A is hydrogen or a substituted or unsubstituted alkyl or vinyl group; and R<sub>1</sub> is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group;

Formula (18)



wherein A is hydrogen or a substituted or unsubstituted alkyl or vinyl group; and R<sub>1</sub> is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group;

Formula (19)



wherein A is hydrogen or a substituted or unsubstituted alkyl or vinyl group; and R<sub>1</sub> is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group.

14. **(Original):** The process according to claim 13, wherein the esterification is carried out in the presence of an enzyme catalyst.

15. **(Original):** The process according to claim 13, wherein the esterification is carried out in the presence of a chemical catalyst.

16. **(Original):** The process according to claim 13, wherein the esterification is carried out while performing a dehydration treatment.

17. **(Original):** The process according to claim 13, wherein the esterification reaction step is followed by the steps of:

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extracting and isolating unreacted carboxylic acid derivative(s) from the esterification reaction mixture with a nonpolar organic solvent; and subsequently, adding excess water to extract and isolate unreacted arbutin and to precipitate the arbutin ester compound.

18-36. (Canceled)

37. (New) The composition according to Claim 11, further comprising a suitable carrier.